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## Senators propose bill that would increase security funds

Thursday, February 17, 2005

**By Bonnie Friedman**  
Journal staff writer

U.S. Sens. Jon Corzine and Frank Lautenberg and Rep. Robert Menendez announced legislation on Feb. 6 that would increase the amount of money New Jersey receives in Homeland Security funding by changing the formula for how funds are allocated to states.

With the proposed legislation, states would receive funding based on threat risk rather than general revenue sharing.

"This is the common-sense Homeland Security Act," Corzine, D-Hoboken, said. "It is designed to reflect the recommendations of the 9/11 Commission that all funding should be based on threat and vulnerability."

The press conference, which was held at the Jersey City Office of Emergency Management on Summit Avenue, comes in the wake of the federal government slashing New Jersey's Homeland Security budget by more than 30 percent, from \$93 million in 2004 to \$61 million in 2005.

Homeland Security funding for Jersey City, the second largest city in the state, dropped by 60 percent to \$6.7 million, down from \$17 million in 2004.

And in Newark, the state's largest city, funding was slashed by 17 percent to \$12.4 million, down from \$14.9 million in 2004.

Under the current program, New Jersey receives \$7.08 per capita, 36th in the nation and almost four times less than Wyoming.

Hudson County Executive Tom DeGise, state Sen. Bernard Kenny (D-Hoboken) and Jersey City Mayor Jerramiah Healy also attended by the event.

Flanked by representatives from the Jersey City Fire Department, officials referred to dangerous and sensitive areas in the state, noting that the FBI has deemed the two-mile stretch between Port Newark and Newark Airport as the most dangerous area in the country.

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"Homeland Security should be based strictly on assessments of risk and threat," Lautenberg said. "If we can get Homeland Security grants based on threat, then New Jersey will finally see its proper share of resources."

Last summer, New Jersey was put on "high alert" after Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge announced that terrorists appeared to be plotting to blow up the Prudential Financial building in Newark.

Menendez characterized the state as "target rich."

"To not understand that the fourth-most active airport in the nation - Newark Airport - is not a real consequence, to not understand that nuclear power plants are not a real consequence, that is to get Homeland Security wrong," Menendez said. "And to get it wrong puts lives at stake."

Speakers also noted the important role New Jersey played on Sept. 11, 2001.

"Jersey City was the first point of refuge for all the victims from the Sept. 11 tragedy," Healy said. "They came to our shores to escape the horror that was going on over there."

Questioned about he might get his fellow colleagues to support the bill, Lautenberg said he would convince them that doing so was in the best interest of the country.

"We've got to persuade the people that what happens here is in the national interest," Lautenberg said. "I think I can make a case and get support from across the country."

Changes to Homeland Security funding would not affect grant programs in place before Sept. 11, 2001, such as Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) program and the Assistance to Firefighters (FIRE) Act program.

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